

1.1.1 Incident Category

Emergency Response; CERCLA; Unified Command established.

1.1.2 Site Description

The 218-acre site produces butadiene and raffinate. Butadiene is used in the production of synthetic rubber used for tires and automobile hoses. Combined production capacity for this facility is more than 900 million pounds per year. Logistics infrastructure capabilities include pipeline, barge, rail and tank car. The Site contains multiple storage tanks and related processing equipment. Treated waste water is discharged from the on-site joint waste water treatment plant (JWWT) direct to the Neches River. Presently, there is no power to the waste water treatment plant.

1.1.2.1 Location

2102 Spur 136, Port Neches, Jefferson County, Texas

29.978056, -93.939167

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

Explosions and fire are threats along with emissions and releases of C4 hydrocarbons and 1,3-butadiene (butadiene), and possible asbestos containing materials.

Firefighting water overtopped the tank containment berm on November 27, 2019. The water discharged to the "201 Canal" which leads to a permitted containment discharge area. On November 28, 2019, a sheen was observed in the 201 Canal.

1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

Due to the instability of the Site, which includes active fires, and the possibility of additional explosions, and limited ability to conduct a detailed status assessment of the tanks, towers, and contents in each after the incident began, on-site preliminary assessment efforts have been minimal.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

At 0100 hours on 27 November 2019, an explosion at the TPC Port Neches facility in Port Neches, TX, started a fire that spread through the South 4 Group processing unit. The blast from the explosion caused damage and shattered windows from residential properties up to a mile away. The City of Groves enacted a shelter in place and instituted a 1/2 mile evacuation zone around the Site. The fire continued to burn throughout the 27th and a second explosion occurred in the early afternoon. The cause of the initial explosion is currently unknown.

After the second explosion, a 4-mile evacuation zone was enacted by the City of Groves. The suspected cause of the second explosion was the collapse of a flaring tower. After further assessing the evacuation zone, the local county judge lifted 4-mile evacuation order on November 29, 2019.

(Air monitoring)

EPA and TCEQ continued air monitoring efforts for 1,3 butadiene, benzene, VOCs, Carbon Monoxide, Oxygen, Hydrogen Sulfide, Lower Explosive Limit and particulates. EPA received an air monitoring plan and an air, water and soil/sediment sampling plan from TPC for review on November 28, 2019. Air monitoring teams did not report any detections over action levels until November 29, 2019 when CTEH and EPA had detected high particulate levels (300 ug/m³). At 0100 hours on December 1, 2019, CTEH air monitoring teams were picking up instantaneous readings of 3.0 ppm of butadiene at the Command Post located at the intersection of highway 366 and SPUR 136. The sustained readings were 2.28 ppm. The command post was moved to the entrance of the joint Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). At approximately 0230 hours, the sustained readings had reduced to 1.0 ppm. In response to the instantaneous 3.0 ppm readings for butadiene, TCEQ air monitoring teams had dispatched to the intersection of highway 366 and SPUR 136. At approximately 0225 hours on December 1, 2019, TCEQ had reported instantaneous readings of .52 ppm for butadiene along with odors. At 0250, TCEQ reported instantaneous readings of .40 ppm along with odors.

(Water Ops)

Firefighting water overtopped the tank containment berm on November 27, 2019. The water discharged to the "201 Canal" which leads to a permitted containment discharge area. On November 28, 2019, a sheen was observed in the 201 Canal. TPC brought in Clean Harbors and Resolute as their Oil Spill Removal Organization (OSRO) contractor. The OSRO deployed 4 drum skimmers, hard boom, sorbents, and trash pumps to remediate the sheen. The facility's Oil Spill Response Organization (OSRO) placed absorbent boom every 50-100 feet along the canal on November 29, 2019. The furthest extent of the sheen was seen at the Port Neches/Atlantic Road approximately 2 miles from the outfall. It did not make it to the Neches River.

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

An evacuation radius of 0.5 mile was established shortly after the initial explosion and a shelter in place was issued for the City of Groves and south of the facility all the way to the Hwy 73 bridge. At approximately 0200 hours EOC was established at the Huntsman Administrative Building at 2701 TX-136, Port Neches TX. START was activated at 0245 hours and arrived on Site at 0530 hours. EPA OSC was activated to respond. ASPECT was deployed and on site by 0800 hours to conduct flyovers of the

incident and downwind community. A no fly zone of 3 miles wide and 3000' high was established surrounding the incident.

At approximately 1400 hours on November 27, 2019, a second explosion that was caused by the collapse of a flaring tower had occurred. As a result, the City of Groves had issued a mandatory 4-mile radius evacuation for the community. Following the event of the second explosion, air monitoring teams had started collecting data downwind and in the community. There were no detections of VOCs found by the EPA air monitoring teams. CTEH had conducted perimeter air monitoring around the site and had detected maximum concentration of 1.2 ppm VOCs.

EPA and TCEQ continued air monitoring efforts for 1,3 butadiene, benzene, VOCs, Carbon Monoxide, Oxygen, Hydrogen Sulfide, Lower Explosive Limit and particulates. After further assessing the evacuation zone, the local county judge lifted 4-mile evacuation order on November 29, 2019. Air monitoring teams did not report any detections over action levels until November 29, 2019 when CTEH and EPA had detected high particulate levels (300 ug/m³). At 0100 hours on December 1, 2019, CTEH air monitoring teams were picking up instantaneous readings of 3.0 ppm of butadiene at the Command Post located at the intersection of highway 366 and SPUR 136. The sustained readings were 2.28 ppm. The command post was moved to the entrance of the joint Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). At approximately 0230 hours, the sustained readings had reduced to 1.0 ppm. In response to the instantaneous 3.0 ppm readings for butadiene, TCEQ air monitoring teams had dispatched to the intersection of highway 366 and SPUR 136. At approximately 0225 hours on December 1, 2019, TCEQ had reported instantaneous readings of .52 ppm for butadiene along with odors. At 0250, TCEQ reported instantaneous readings of .40 ppm along with odors.

START air monitoring teams were also activated to respond and conduct ground air monitoring around the vicinity of the incident and in the downwind community.

Water Safety Zone was established by USCG from Neches River Light 20 (Fina Lower Anchorage) to Neches River Light 29 (Phillips 66). USCG are currently allowing barge traffic monitored one at a time. In addition to ASPECT air monitoring, there are currently 3 EPA air monitoring teams collecting data downwind and in the community. There have been no detections of VOCs by the EPA air monitoring teams at this time.

On behalf of TPC, CTEH conducted perimeter air monitoring around the Site and has detected a single maximum concentration of 1.2 ppm VOCs. At approximately 1348 a second explosion occurred at the Site. After the second explosion, the County Judge's Office expanded the mandatory evacuation zone to a 4-mile radius.

In addition, TCEQ is conducting air monitoring in the community with four teams. An air monitoring strike team was established, which is comprised of personnel from EPA, TCEQ, and TPC. This strike team will be dispatched to conduct air monitoring at locations where detections were measured above the 5.0 ppm VOC action level or 0.5 ppm butadiene action level, to determine sustained or instantaneous measurements.

2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)

The PRP for this incident, at this time, is Texas Petrochemical (TPC) located in Port Neches, Texas.

2.1.4 Progress Metrics

No progress metrics have been provided at this time by TPC.

Air monitoring action levels were established for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) at 5 parts per million (ppm) and 1,3-butadiene at 0.5 ppm.

There have been no reported air monitoring results detected nor detected above action levels by EPA ground air monitoring teams nor the ASPECT air monitoring conducted during the initial 24 hours.

Waste Stream	Medium	Quantity	Manifest #	Treatment	Disposal
--------------	--------	----------	------------	-----------	----------

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

Response efforts will be ramped up or down as dictated by the incident. TPC has been directed to contain and recover liquid spillage and fire water. Air monitoring efforts will continue in the impacted area and downwind community. Fire suppression will be continued. Unified Command will continue to share information with the stakeholders and community. Unified Command will continue to communicate any air monitoring measurements in the community above Unified Command approved action levels to local authorities for actions to be determined and communicated to the community. Actions may include shelter in place or evacuation.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

Continue air monitoring throughout the impacted area and downwind community.

Contain and recover released liquids.

Continue fire suppression and vapor suppression, if needed.

Continue water sampling for the Neches River.

Continue air sampling and analysis for asbestos.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

Operations are 24 hours/day and began with two operational periods (0100 to 1300 and 1300 to 0100).

Unified Command determined a 24 hour operational period from 0600 to 0600 would be followed for the next operational period going forward.

2.2.2 Notes

Air monitoring action levels were established for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) at 5 parts per million (ppm) and 1,3-butadiene at 0.5 ppm.

There have been no reported air monitoring results detected nor detected above action levels by EPA ground air monitoring teams nor the ASPECT air monitoring conducted during the initial 24 hours.

2.3 Logistics Section

NA

2.4 Finance Section

NA

2.5 Other Command Staff

NA

3. Participating Entities

3.1 Unified Command

Unified Command was established on 11/27/2019 with TPC, EPA, TCEQ, and County and Local authorities.

3.2 Cooperating Agencies

Additional agencies that have responded or are responding include OSHA, USCG, NOAA, Jefferson County Judge's Office, Port Neches Police Department, DPS, Civil Support Team, Texas Department of Emergency Management, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Port Neches Fire Department, Nederland Fire Department, Port Arthur Fire Department, Groves Fire Department, Silsvee Volunteer Fire Department, Port Arthur Police Department, Golden Triangle Incident Management Team, Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council, Groves Police Department, Nederland Police Department, Port Neches Police Department, Jefferson County Office of Emergency Management, Acadian Emergency Management Services, Texas General Land Office, Texas Highway Patrol, Lower Neches Valley Authority, and Drainage District #7. This list is not all inclusive.

4. Personnel On Site

Representatives from participating agencies are present at their discretion.

5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

6. Additional sources of information

6.1 Internet location of additional information/report

Additional information can be obtained at www.response.epa.gov/south4groupfire.

6.2 Reporting Schedule

Additional POLREP's will be provided as needed. A Final POLREP will be submitted upon completion.

7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.